2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

control on quality and could bring together sufficient produce to make a transaction with an exporter worthwhile. As more and more Badagas became interested in growing cash crops, middlemen appeared not only to buy up small quantities of tea, coffee and potato but also to sell seed, fertilizer and even some insurance.

After Independence profiteering by the middlemen was largely checked by the Nilgiri Cooperative Marketing Society set up with state government aid (Vivekanandam Pillai, 1937, 249). Today there are nearly two hundred cooperative societies in the Nilgiris which pool the resources of members and also supply cheap fertilizer. Many such societies own local tea-processing factories and warehouses and are dominated by Badagas. After 1957 heavy loss through potato disease caused a widespread shift to tea or coffee growing,[22] and in the 1970s large acreages have been devoted to growing a sturdy new German variety of cabbage which finds markets nation-wide. Both tea and cabbage are quite successful crops. The availability of help from the Central Cooperative Bank made these unexpected switches in crops possible, for otherwise the initial capital outlay and the small size of most estates would have rendered the new venture unfeasible. Several cottage industries have also helped diversify the rural economy over the past thirty years; in particular beekeeping, liquor distilling, milk sales, knitting and embroidery have provided new, regular sources of income for many hundreds of Badaga families.

The early twentieth century saw the rise not only of wealthy Badaga land-owners but also of large-scale labour contractors. A few men profitted by getting the contracts for gangs to dig pits for planting tea-cuttings, pick coffee-beans, build roads or construct public buildings in the district.[23] Less wealthy Badagas set themselves up as small shopkeepers, tailors or money-lenders or found work in a wide variety of urban trades.[24] Whenever possible the more resourceful reinvested their profits in land (Ranga, 1934, 10), either tea and coffee estates or farm plots formerly belonging to Kotas (Mandelbaum, 1955, 240). The other reinvestment commonly made was in college education for their sons. With the economy fully monetized the stress was now on providing stability for the coming generations.

MODERN EMPLOYMENT

Prior to World War I virtually all Badagas were cultivators, and

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

for a progressive, educated groom is like purchasing security for one's daughter.

No longer are the wealthiest families members of the gentry. The latter have recently been supplanted by *parvenus* with the ability to wield more influence and political power. These *nouveaux riches*, contractors, businessmen, dealers in illicit liquor[5] and plantation owners, have wherever possible reinvested their earnings in tea or coffee estates and private bus lines. Occasionally, too, this new-found capital has been invested in Badaga-owned businesses in the towns. Another popular type of investment is in sending sons to college, which can bring prestige to a family in a short space of time. Men who obtain degrees in law or medicine are assured a high social position in the Nilgiris, where they usually practise, but those who manage only a B.A. or B.Sc. find it brings some prestige but rarely a well-paying job. Nevertheless, upwardly mobile families wish their sons to take a bachelor's degree and then to settle down in their home villages and farm the land.

Among those wealthy enough to expect or to pay a substantial gift at marriage, fulfilment of their traditional roles in the society can become a problem-laden, anachronistic burden. Such men may command annual incomes a hundred times greater than the average for other men in their home village. As a consequence of this newly apparent inequality the wealthy are constantly plagued by importunate villagers and distant relations, as well as Toda and Kota friends, who try to activate traditional bonds of kinship or friendship so as to grasp their share in the power and influence of the *nouveaux riches*. It is therefore not surprising that the wealthiest Badagas have tended to leave their natal villages and build themselves comfortable houses in a town or in the middle of their tea estates. As the wealth of these families grows and as the possibility of their upward mobility, as modern Indian families rather than Badaga villagers, becomes a reality, their attitudes towards the traditional society and its marriage regulations change. No longer are the requirements of their old culture so demanding or so relevant, for these people are now oriented towards a larger South Indian society whose aims and ideals are for them represented in the morality and the cultural paraphernalia of modern romantic Indian films.

THE NEW FACTIONS

By the end of the nineteenth century there may have been several

requirements were mainly salt, sugar, tobacco and a few trinkets. Cloth might either be obtained at the market or would be brought up into the Nilgiri villages from the Coimbatore Plain by an itinerant Chetti trader (Ward 1821: lxv). The establishment of a bazaar in Ootacamund during the 1820's, and later of others in Coonoor, Wellington, Kotagiri, Ketti and Manjūr, made consumer goods available to the Badagas on a scale and in a variety never before known to them. The ability to acquire some of these new items was presumably one factor in the drive towards greater participation in the cash economy.

Yet the transition took a century to complete. All of the basic requirements for food, goods and services continued to be provided either by the efforts of the Badagas themselves or by their Toda, Kota and Kurumba associates. From the 1820's onwards the Badagas attended the local markets for what they had previously bought in Gundlupet or Kāramaḍai -- salt, sugar, tobacco and trinkets -- but they never sold very much in the markets, and so they rarely had much cash to spend. With the First World War, however, changes in their marketing practices became more apparent. The crucial demand for vegetables to feed the many European troops in India, Burma, Malaya and Ceylon stimulated the change in crops that we have described above (pp. 94-99): Badagas began exporting potatoes and other vegetables to these remote places, and some made handsome profits (Francis 1908: 167).

The cash that came in from this new venture was spent in a great variety of ways. The most obvious was in buying new clothes: in the 1920's men first began to sport European-style shirts and jackets, and in the 1930's women first started to wear colored saris. A few of the more resourceful men invested their incomes in more land or houses, thus laying a stable foundation for future genera-

454 tions.

The period between the two World Wars saw the rise not only of wealthy 178 Badaga land-owners, but also of labor contractors. A few men profited by getting (556) contracts to build roads or construct public buildings in the District. Two patterns (454) of reinvestment were common among such men: one was in land (Ranga 1934: 10), even in tea and coffee estates; the other was in college education for their sons. Less wealthy Badagas during the same period set themselves up as small shop-keepers or money-lenders, or, hired themselves out as builders, carpenters, water-carriers and even coolies (Francis 1908: 129; Ranga 1934: 8).

For many Badagas with small land-holdings, this period of transition was 426 marked by the frustrations of indebtedness. Pieces of land were sometimes sold (178) to non-Badagas in order to pay off outstanding debts; but in general Badaga debtors tried to honor their obligations, and worked hard either to produce profitable cash crops or to buy back their former lands (Thurston 1909: I, 64; Ranga 1934: 4; Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 249).

We may say that the take-off for economic growth within the cash economy 178 was complete by 1930, when most of the Badagas had permanently severed their 648 traditional exchange-relationship with the Kotas. This, from the Badaga point of (439) view, was an advantageous move, for it allowed them to buy pottery, ropes and metal goods in the bazaar at a lower price than the Kotas were getting. This is not to say that Kotas had been receiving cash; but the traditional dole of grain they were given at each harvest was becoming increasingly costly to the Badagas because of rising grain prices. We shall discuss this point further when we come to consider recent factions (see Chapters VII and VIII).

178 While tea and coffee yield the highest profit per acre, they require

days the most affluent and prestigeful families were the gentry, and gentry boys normally married only the daughters of the gentry. Today a wealthy Badaga, whether of the gentry or not, will often be willing to pay a dowry in order to marry his daughter into another wealthy family.

The wealthiest of Badaga families today are not necessarily members of the gentry at all, although formerly this was always true. It is the wealthy *parvenus* who have recently supplanted the traditional gentry in the ability to wield maximum influence and political power. How have such families become wealthy? As we have seen (Chapter VI), some have been able to plant large areas with tea or coffee, and these estates have brought in tremendous profits; others have become contractors for various building projects -- the Nilgiri railway and the army barracks being major cases of this. Others again are middlemen, distributing fertilizers or dealing in potato crops. Yet others have been making money from the large-scale distribution of illicitly made liquor, ever since prohibition was instituted directly after Independence. Regardless of the way in which the money was acquired in the first place, it is wherever possible invested in tea or coffee plantations, or perhaps in privately owned bus-lines. Such new-found capital is sometimes invested in Badaga businesses in Ootacamund or Coonoor, as well. Another type of investment is in the support of sons studying at universities; and this can bring high prestige to a family in a short period of time. Men who can obtain degrees in medicine or law are assured a high social position in the Nilgiris, but those who manage to get only a B.A. or a B.Sc., whether by bribery or by hard work, find that it brings some prestige but rarely any additional income. Upwardly mobile families now wish their sons to take at least a bachelor's degree, but afterwards expect the graduates to settle down in their home villages again and

177 178 (242) the traditional ox-drawn plow (Ranga 1934: 11); and as a result of these technological changes Badagas had to develop new kinds of laboring patterns, involving contractors and non-Badaga workers. A whole nexus of new social relationships emerged: foodstuffs had to be bought in shops, cash had to be borrowed wherever it might be had, agents and middlemen had to be sought out and dealt with, lowland laborers had to be employed, European planters and government farming advisers had to be consulted, educated opinion had to be sought out.

178 648 (241) In the early years of this century a new way of life was being developed by the Badaga farmers. It was a way of life in which they could readily perceive that certain elements from the traditional culture were no longer practicable. The close and important tie with the Kotas was a case in point: Badagas often did not grow the millet crops they were customarily expected to give to the Kotas, and the rising grain prices led to a situation where traditional Kota products could be obtained much more cheaply by purchase in a bazaar. Finally, around the year 1928, relations with the Kotas were formally broken off by a majority of Badagas.

178 (554) (177) The initial change in agricultural practices led to other kinds of sociocultural change, too. These stemmed primarily from the fact that the Badagas were successful in their new ventures, and as a consequence were making cash profits on a scale never previously possible. New avenues for spending opened up, and new consumer goods appeared in the Badaga hamlets. Those who could find more land to buy did so: this is a familiar theme among the nouveaux-riches of rural India (cf. Epstein 1962: 85 ff.). But not very much land has changed hands in this century, and few new areas have been opened up for farming recently. Profits have therefore necessarily been invested in other ways: large new houses have been built, watches, radios and other consumer goods have been brought into the

(454) (554)

178 community, and the education of one's sons have become new indicators of social
(454) (554) status and agricultural success.

The easier access to wealth and higher education in the decades since 1913
(212) has brought further socio-cultural changes to the Badagas. For an agricultural community in India they have an unusually high rate of literacy (77.8% of males, 51.8% of females in 1963) and of knowledge about the nation, the government and international affairs. Much of this information is no more than conversation material; but it sometimes becomes relevant when unusual decisions have to be taken, or new regulations dealt with: how to get a loan for terracing fields, or where to go for a scholarship,
(184) for example. University education has led to the appearance of a new urban class of Badagas, who may still live in the natal village, but who maintain offices in the towns where they practice as doctors, lawyers or businessmen. A few Badagas are prominent in state and national politics, too. A random sample of 301 males in 1963 in-
(871) cluded 9.6% who had attended college.

These economic changes have taken place against a backdrop of steadily
489 (178) improving communications media. All of the more populous villages are linked with the towns by regular bus services. There has been a railway service to the plains since the beginning of the century. Many of the middlemen who sell fertilizers or buy potatoes have their own trucks. A few of the more successful tea-growers
177 possess cars or jeeps as well. Most Badagas now spend one day a week in the nearest market town, where they not only buy provisions but also talk to acquaintances in the tea-shops, pick up the latest gossip, and see a Tamil film. Radio is used mainly as a channel for hearing light music, and is not so important as the films in introducing new, primarily urban, values and wants to the Badagas. It is probably no exaggeration to say that today every Badaga hamlet has easy access to